



Government Administration and Elections Committee
Testimony prepared by Dr. Alice Pritchard
March 16, 2009

Good morning. My name is Alice Pritchard and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. I am testifying today to raise concerns about HB 6375: *An Act Concerning Review and Termination of Certain Boards and Commissions*.

For the past four years, through the Office for Workforce Competitiveness, I have served as consultant to the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board. I have also been an advocate for nearly two decades on workforce development for women and girls in the state.

The Connecticut Allied Health Workforce Policy Board (AHWPB) was established in Public Act 04-220 (*An Act Concerning Allied Health Workforce Needs*) to conduct research and planning activities related to the allied health workforce. Under HB 6375, the AHWPB is slated to be terminated in October 2009 at a time when attention to the allied health workforce is critical.

The Board began meeting in March 2005 and issued its first report to the legislature in February 2006. Throughout its tenure, the Board has met regularly to discuss current initiatives in allied health in the state, gaps in workforce data, issues related to educational programming, and recruitment and retention of the workforce, as well as researching and developing solutions to allied health workforce shortages. In addition, the Board has commissioned key studies of faculty shortages and clinical placement opportunities.

The experiences of key stakeholders and our commissioned research are highlighted in the *Allied Health Workforce Policy Board's Annual Legislative Report*. Copies of legislative report were sent to your office in early February and earlier reports are posted at www.cwealf.org.

The AHWPB has made great strides since its establishment in 2004 and should continue its work to monitor the workforce supply and demand for health care workers as well as best practices for promoting recruitment and retention of these workers. The volunteer board and regular participants provide critical information on the state's ability to train and employ the needed health care workforce. There is no other single entity facilitating these important conversations.

With your support, the Board can continue to play a key role in convening stakeholders who are conducting a variety of initiatives. We have learned a great deal over the last several years and with implementation of our legislative recommendations the state can impact health care workforce shortages. Now is not the time to terminate this effective Commission and I urge your removal of the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board from this legislation.

I am also submitting testimony related to *SB 839 An Act Concerning Mergers and Consolidations of Various State Agencies*. In particular, I oppose the consolidation of the Office of the Child Advocate with the Attorney General's office and the consolidation of the Departments of Higher Education and Education.

The Office of the Child Advocate has been instrumental in protecting the rights of the children under the state's care. Whether it is the Department of Children and Families or Corrections, the Office of the Child Advocate has investigated complaints and offered recommended changes to better meet the needs of children and youth. Their continued staffing is vital to the ongoing monitoring of these services and agencies. Though they work collaboratively with the Attorney General's office, it is important that they continue to act independently as the Attorney General's office defends the state in these cases.

The consolidation of the Departments of Education and Higher Education is also ill-advised. These two state agencies have critical missions and important target populations. In fact, over time the State Department of Education's mission has stretched from the education of children in pre-school to adults in high school completion programs. The Department of Higher Education must guide the growth of our state's higher education system. These institutions will play a significant role in the education of adults seeking a place in our state's workforce. Again, though they work collaboratively and should continue to do so, it is critical that they maintain their independence and focus. I urge your rejection of these consolidations.

I thank you for your time and am always available to answer any questions or provide additional information.